

Southline Transmission Line Project



Proposed Environmental Impact Statement and Possible Land Use Plan Amendments for the Southline Transmission Line Project

**BLM New Mexico and Arizona State Offices
Western Area Power Administration**

Purpose of the Meeting



The purpose of this Agency Scoping meeting is to:

- ▶ Provide opportunities for agency involvement
- ▶ Describe the proposed project
- ▶ Describe BLM and Western's roles
- ▶ Describe the NEPA and EIS Process
- ▶ Get your input on issues and concerns to be considered in the EIS



What is a Cooperator?



BLM is committed to engaging and involving our agency partners as Cooperating Agencies or "Cooperators"

A Cooperator will:

- ▶ Share the responsibility for organizing the planning process
- ▶ Be formally involved in scoping and help to define and frame issues to be analyzed
- ▶ Develop information and analysis on behalf of the agency they represent
- ▶ Contribute staff to participate on the Interdisciplinary Team
- ▶ Collaborate to the fullest extent practicable

Role of Cooperators



The **role** of the **Cooperator** is to:

- ▶ Participate in the EIS process
- ▶ Provide leadership, expertise, guidance, and review for the environmental analysis
- ▶ Provide information related to your agency's role
- ▶ Identify issues of concern regarding project impacts on the natural and human-made environment
- ▶ Provide timely input on unresolved issues

How to Participate as a Cooperator



To become a Cooperator:

- ▶ Respond in writing describing the potential issues or concerns to the physical, natural, and socioeconomic environment that are of interest to your agency.
- ▶ Any federal, state, tribal or local agency with jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to an environmental issue may, by agreement, be a cooperating agency
 - ▶ An agreement (MOU) that identifies your responsibilities as a Cooperating Agency in preparing the EIS will be made prior to your participation.
 - ▶ As a Cooperator your participation may include those activities outlined in 40 CFR 1501.6(b)

Proposed Project

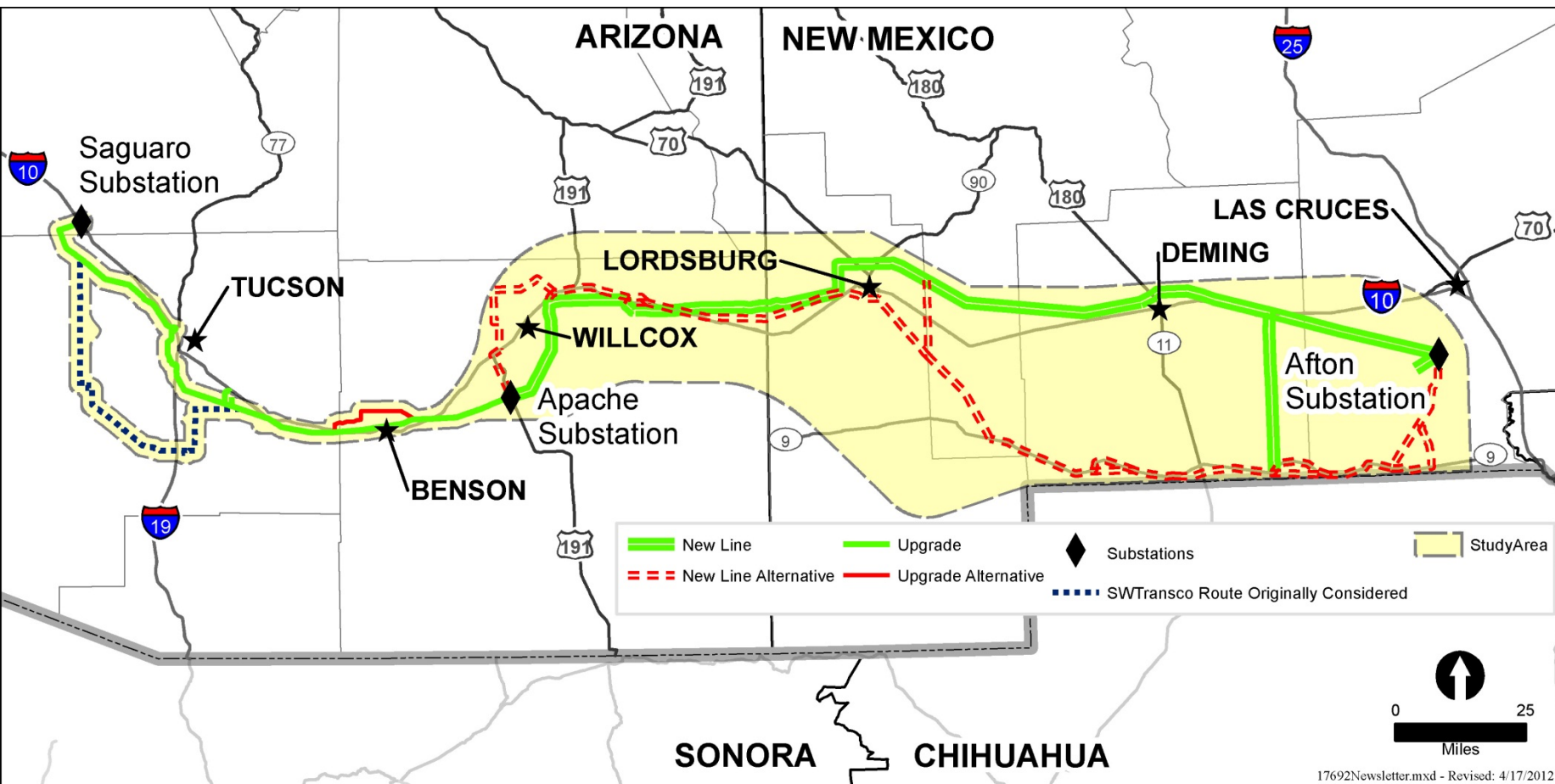


Southline Transmission, LLC (Southline) submitted a right-of-way (ROW) application and initial Plan of Development (POD) to construct, operate, and maintain an electric transmission line in southern New Mexico and Arizona.

- ▶ The proposed project would include a total of approximately 360 miles of *new* or *upgraded* transmission lines.
 - ▶ 240 miles (new build)
 - ▶ 120 miles (rebuild)



Project Location



Project Setting



► ROW lands

Land Status	Amount
Public	±34% (Primarily BLM, 0.5-mile USFS)
State	±35%
Private	±31%
Tribal	2-miles of rebuild (Tohono O'odham Nation)



- ▶ Project located on BLM lands managed by 3 Resource Management Plans (RMPs):
 - ▶ Mimbres RMP (1993 – being updated)
 - ▶ Safford RMP (1992)
 - ▶ Phoenix District RMP (1989)

- ▶ RMP amendment may be required
 - ▶ visual resources management, utility corridors, etc.

- ▶ Other applicable permits:
 - ▶ Federal, state, and local

Participant Roles



Joint Lead Federal Agencies

▶ **Bureau of Land Management**

- ▶ New Mexico State Office – Lead BLM State
- ▶ Las Cruces District Office – BLM Authorized Officer, William Childress, District Manager
 - ▶ Tom Hurshman, Project Manager – BLM contact for the project

▶ **Western Area Power Administration**

- ▶ Mark Wieringa – NEPA Document Manager
- ▶ Matt Blevins – Environmental Team Lead
- ▶ Consultants

Proponent

- ▶ Southline Transmission, LLC

NEPA and the EIS Process



- ▶ **National Environmental Policy Act (1969):**
 - ▶ Requires Federal agencies (BLM and Western) to analyze and disclose impacts for major federal actions like transmission lines.
- ▶ **EIS analysis:**
 - ▶ Describe existing environmental conditions
 - ▶ Identify key issues to focus analysis
 - ▶ Identify reasonable alternatives to consider and analyze
 - ▶ Identify environmental consequences/impacts of proposed projects and ways to avoid or reduce impacts.
 - ▶ Findings from EIS help public officials make informed decisions about the project.

NEPA and the EIS Process



- ▶ **Scoping** (from previous slide)
 - ▶ The process Federal agencies use in early stages of preparing an EIS to solicit input on issues, concerns, and opportunities that may arise.
 - ▶ Public participation and input on the proposed project and alternatives development is encouraged.
 - ▶ Issues and concerns from the public drive the agency's alternative formulation process, separate from the proponent's routing efforts.

Potentially Affected Resources



The EIS will provide a detailed study of human and natural resources including:

Human Resources:

- Human Health and Safety
- Socioeconomic Conditions and Environmental Justice
- Visual Resources
- Transportation
- Farmlands and Range Lands
- Land Use
- Cultural Resources
- Intentional Destructive Acts

Natural Resources:

- Air Quality and Climate Change
- Geological and Mineral Resources
- Paleontological
- Soils
- Special Designations
- Vegetation
- Water Resources
- Wildlife

EIS Process



2012

- ▶ **Notice of Intent**
 - ▶ Published in Federal Register **April 4, 2012**
 - ▶ Scoping Period and 60 day comment period will end **June 4, 2012**

2013

- ▶ **Draft EIS**
 - ▶ Comment period (90 days)
 - ▶ Response to Public Comments

2014

- ▶ **Final EIS**
 - ▶ Proposed Plan Amendment (if required)
- ▶ **Record of Decision**
 - ▶ At least 30 days after Final EIS
 - ▶ Adopt Plan Amendment (if required)

Southline Transmission Project

Applicant Scoping Presentation

Agency Meetings

May 2012



The Project Team

- Sponsor / Applicant:
**Southline Transmission,
L.L.C.**
- Project Managers:
**Black Forest Partners,
L.P.**



Project Overview

- Proposed transmission line in southern NM and AZ consisting of two segments:
 - New ~ 240-mile, 345-kV double-circuit between the existing Afton (NM) and Apache (AZ) substations
 - Upgrades to ~ 120 miles of existing lines between the existing Apache (AZ) and Saguaro (AZ) substations
- Interconnection with 10+ existing substations along the Project route
 - May include interconnection with one new substation in New Mexico
- Project design based on regional transmission planning activities since 2009

Project Need

Improve reliability

- Aging infrastructure
- Limited interconnections between southern New Mexico and Arizona
- Transmission system vulnerable to wildfire and storm related outages



Project Need

Relieve congestion

- Lack of sufficient transmission capacity in the Desert Southwest
- Local utilities constrained in ability to consistently access cost-efficient existing energy sources



Project Need

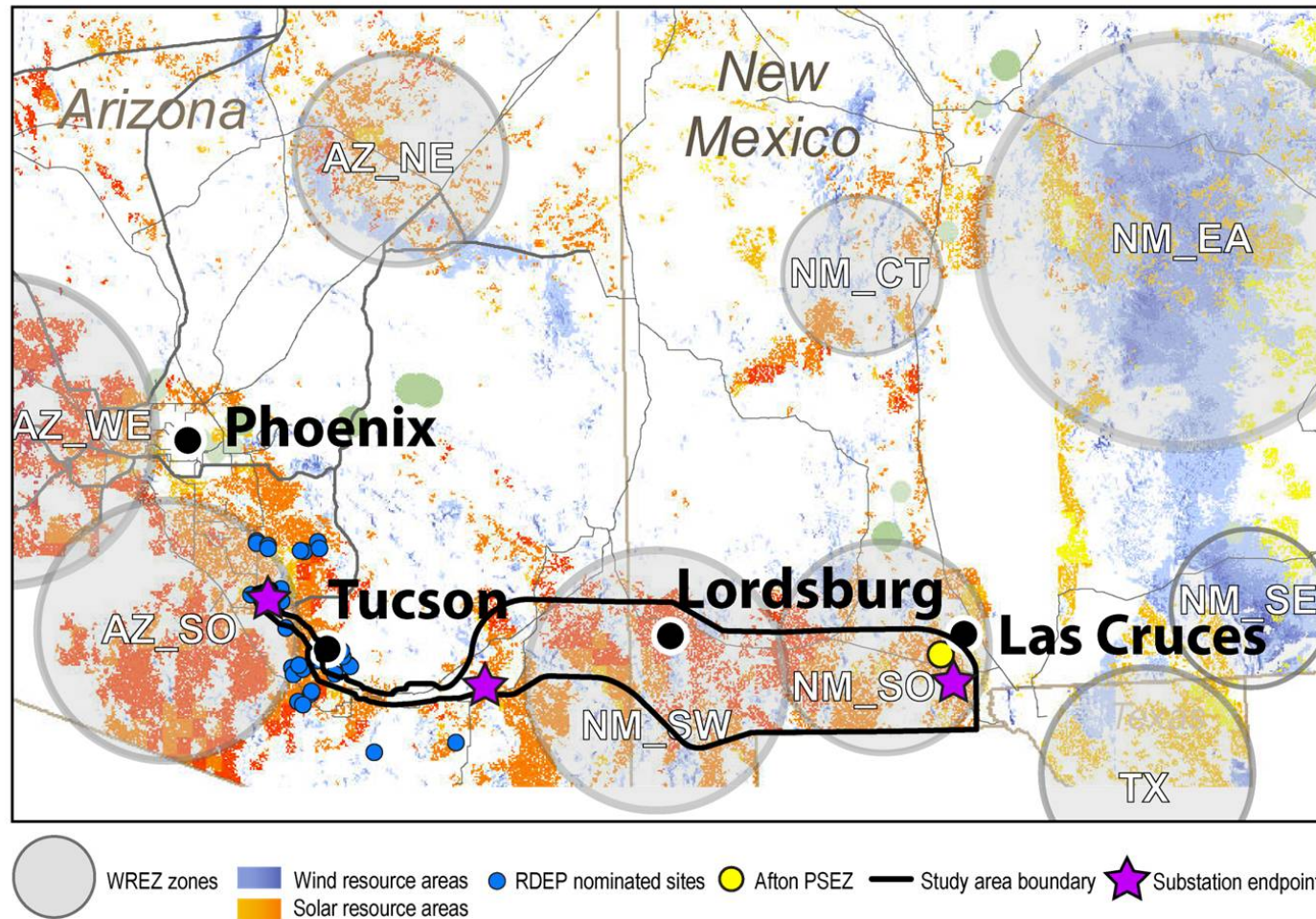
Sustain and Support Growth

- Continued population growth in the West will drive demand
- 28% population growth in Arizona and 10% growth in New Mexico anticipated for 2010–2020



Project Need

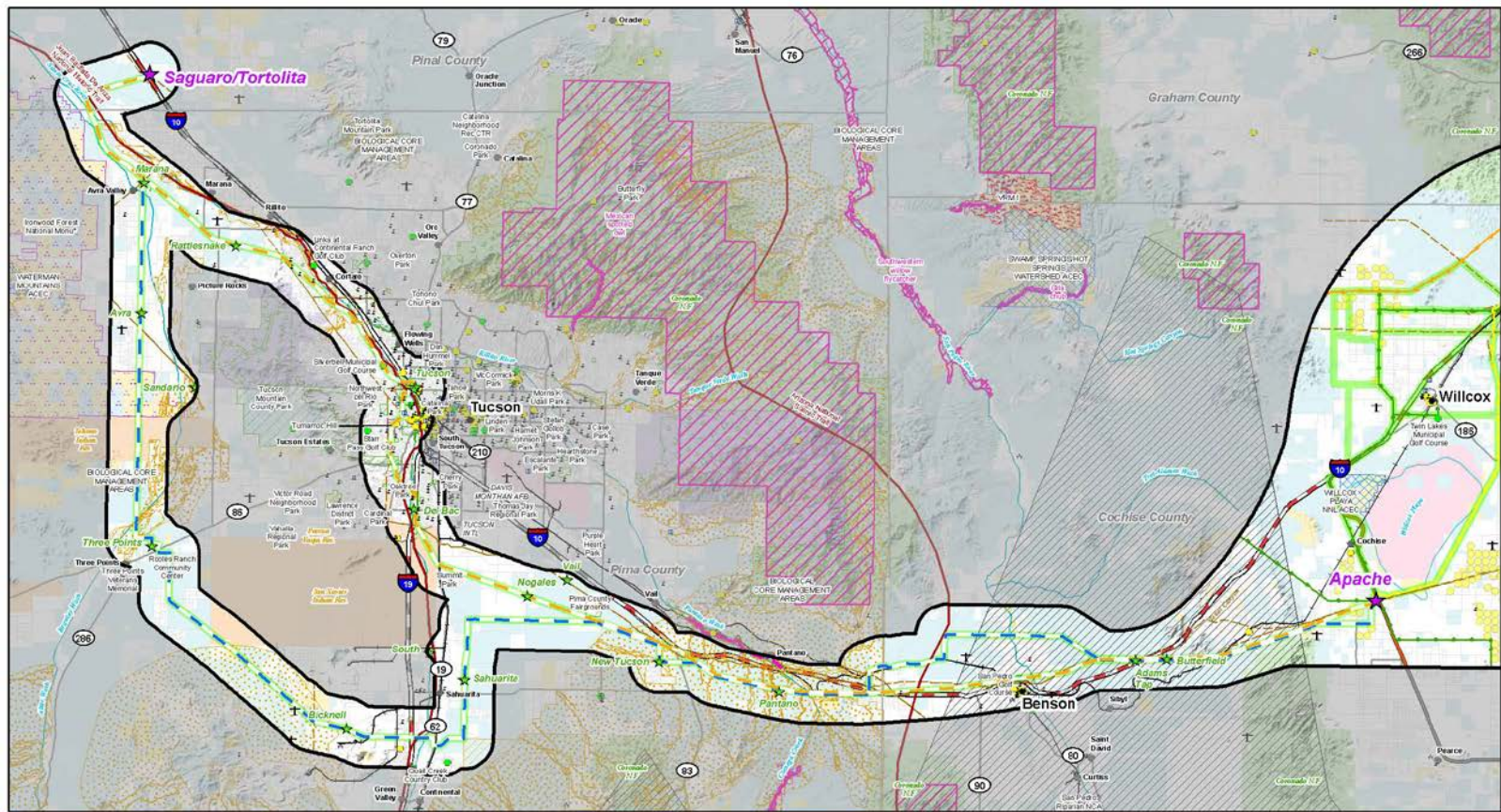
Facilitate access to renewable energy resources



Siting and Planning Philosophy

- Work within, or next to, existing corridors
- Avoid sensitive environmental/cultural areas
- Use existing federal, state and other land use information
- Work closely with interested stakeholders and land use managers to, where possible, avoid or minimize impacts to sensitive areas
- Consider sensitive resources during engineering design, construction and operations and maintenance

Southline Transmission Project Potential Corridors Upgrade Section – Fall 2011



**Opportunities and Constraints
Upgrade Section**

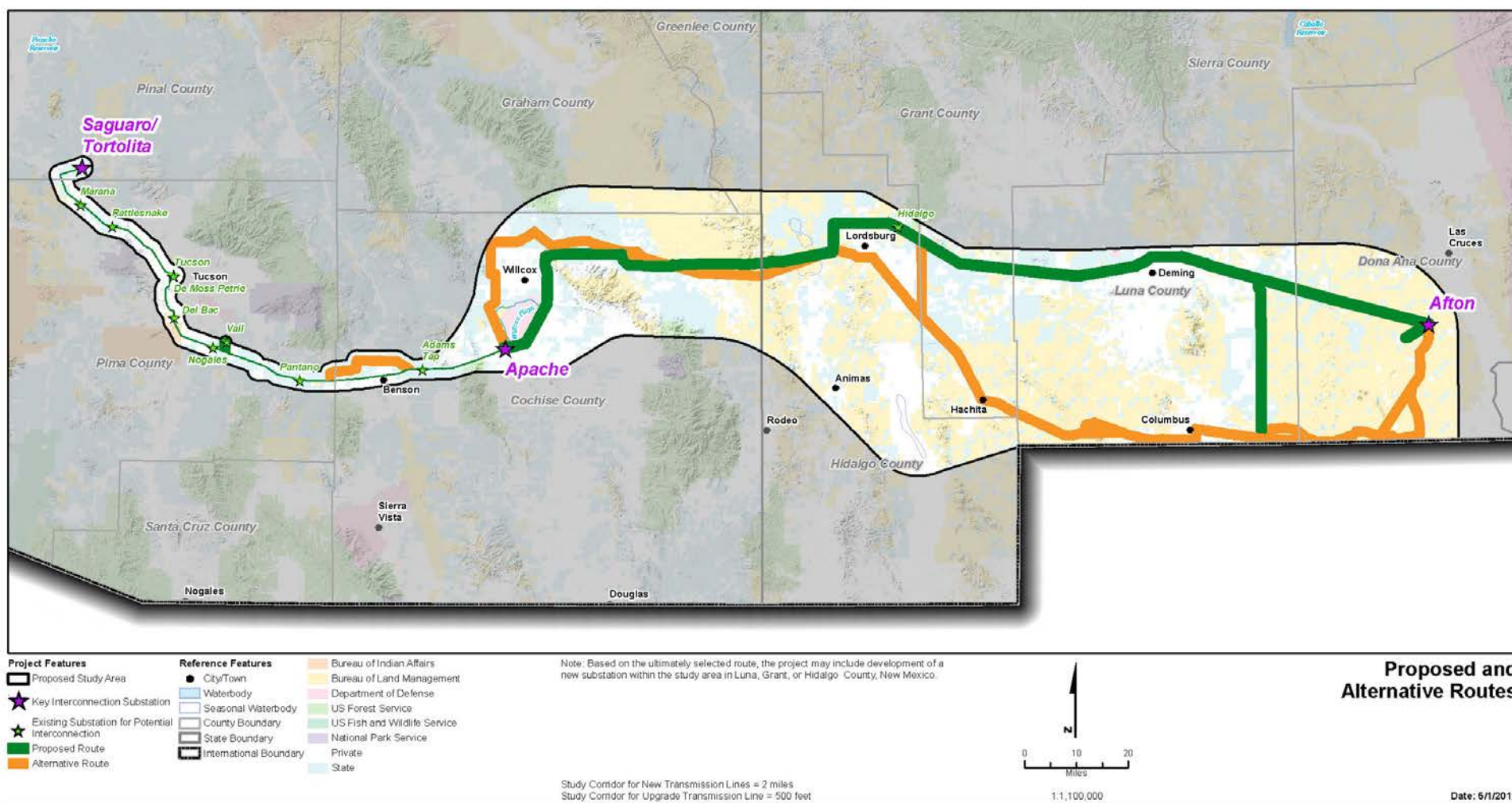
Early Southline-Sponsored Stakeholder Engagement

- Interviews and Stakeholder Outreach Meetings
(Jul – Aug 2011)
- Public Informational Meetings and Workshops
(Sept – Nov 2011)
- Agency Routing Webinars
(Nov 2011)
- Ongoing Stakeholder Outreach

Selected Key Feedback Informing Development of Proposed Routes

- Use existing rights of way where possible
- Minimize visual impact
- Avoid Wilderness Study Areas and other sensitive habitats
- Avoid cultural sites
- Address potential Department of Defense land use conflicts
- Facilitate development of future renewable energy projects
- Minimize miles of transmission required to meet needs
- Respect local knowledge and community feedback

Southline Transmission Project Proposed Routes for BLM/Western Review



Call us:
(888) 752-2822

Email us:
connect@southlinetransmissionproject.com

Visit our Website:
www.southlinetransmissionproject.com



Next Steps



Next Steps



- ▶ Co-Lead agencies will consider project routes provided by Southline Transmission, LLC
- ▶ The project team is seeking input from agency cooperators throughout the process
- ▶ Next NEPA milestone: Draft EIS
 - ▶ *We'll be looking for your comments again*



Thank you for participating!



Tips for providing comments:

- ▶ Keep your comments focused on the proposed project being analyzed
- ▶ Submit your comments within 60-days
(June 4, 2012)
- ▶ Sign up for the mailing list to receive notices of project progress
- ▶ Provide your ideas for project alternatives and potential impacts of concern

How to Participate



To provide your input or become a Cooperator:

- ▶ Mail: Bureau of Land Management
Attention: Frances Martinez
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005-3371
- ▶ Phone: Tom Hurshman (970) 240-5345
- ▶ E-mail: BLM_NM_Southline@blm.gov
- ▶ Website: <http://www.blm.gov/nm/southline>